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When you Buy or Make Summer Curtains

A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, broadcast Thursday, April 13, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home program, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 93 associate radio stations.

MAY 26 1939 ☆

U. S. Department of Agriculture

WALLACE KADDERLY:

Here's Ruth Van Deman again to bring us more news and facts from the Bureau of Home Economics. Last week you remember it was all about eggs---how to make souffles---hollandaise sauce---and some of the other dishes that call for lots of eggs. And, by the way, Ruth, you and Mike Rowell certainly timed that egg conversation just right---judging by the post cards asking for your egg leaflet. They're rolling in about the way the eggs rolled onto the White House lawn last Monday - - -

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

I don't believe in quite such numbers as that. Maybe more like the baskets of eggs that went to the party.

Well, today I'm going to leave the food side of the Bureau of Home Economics. I'm going to step over the textile laboratories. I want you to know about some work going on there---something else a homemaker thinks about in the springtime---window curtains for the house---new ones or how to freshen up the old ones.

Here in Washington, where it gets so hot and steamy in summer, lots of us take down the winter draperies and don't put up any in the summer. But some people don't like to leave the house looking that bare. And in some places where the summer is cool, it's pleasant to have thin curtains at the windows. They keep out glare---give more privacy. And there is something very restful and relaxing about a filmy curtain swaying gently at the window in the summer breeze.

Marquisette of course is one of the popular materials for thin curtains. It gives good service if you get a good quality.

So to find out what service it's reasonable to expect from different qualities of marquisette, Bess Viemont Morrison is running tests on 28 different kinds. Work with curtains of course is nothing new for her.

Bess Viemont Morrison is the same Bess Viemont who write our bulletin on window curtaining. Everybody who uses that says it's a regular handbook. And it does tell how to go about making all kinds of curtains---over-draperies, draw curtains, glass curtains, French headings, pinch pleats, everything a well-made curtain should have, if it's going to hand true and even.

But you'd laugh if you saw the curtains that Mrs. Morrison has made from these marquisettes on test. They look like patchwork. They're made of half-yard pieces of 28 different kinds. Some are all cotton---some part

(over)

cotton and part rayon---some all rayon. And they range in weight---from the very fine, weighing less than three quarters of an ounce to the square yard ---ones so filmy you could draw them through a wedding ring---right down to the very heavy.

The object of this test is to find the effect of light, and heat, and dirt and laundering different qualities of marquisette.

As to the light, these windows are on the east side of the building. So the curtains get a good deal of sunlight. There's a radiator underneath each window, with the heat and the dust rising straight up through the curtains. And there are screens in the windows. The curtains rub against them and get a lot of wear that way too. And occasionally they blow out the window.

Every two months the curtains are washed and dried, and put up again. This has been going on now since last September, and Mrs. Morrison is beginning to get some very interesting results---especially on the way you can expect curtain marquisette to shrink.

She finds that the very fine all-cotton marquisette shrinks more crosswise than lengthwise. Several of the 40-inch wide fabrics came down to 32 inches after they were washed.

So it's best to have fine cotton marquisette curtains very full at the start---full enough to allow for this shrinkage. Otherwise they'll soon look stringy.

That goes for the all-cotton. The cotton-and-rayon mixed, and the all-rayon drew up much, much more in length than they shrank in width. Figured on the standard length of a curtain, some of these rayon marquisettes shrank 10 to 12 inches.

So anybody who happens to be making or hanging rayon marquisette curtains better start with them very long. Hang them so they come to the bottom of the apron on the window casing---that wide strip of wood below the sill. And put a double fold in the curtain heading. You'll need all this extra length when the marquisette shrinks. And you'll probably end up with curtains hanging just to the sill.

In the course of our talk about her research on fabrics, Mrs. Morrison volunteered some suggestions about washing curtains. She happened to have a letter there on her desk asking whether it was better to dry clean or wash---and whether to put on curtain stretchers, or mangle, or use an iron. This was from the owner of some very nice thin rayon curtains.

Wherever it's possible Mrs. Morrison advises good lukewarm soapsuds---made with neutral soap. The dirt in curtains is mostly dust---not the kind of dirt that dry cleaning solvents take out very well. Soap and water does a better job.

But before you wash the curtains, put them in an old pillowcase---or one of the regular washing nets you use for small articles in a washing

machine. And don't crowd the curtains. Two pairs to a bag are enough.

Then wet them in cool water before you put them into the warm suds. By the way, make it heavy suds with plenty of soap. If you put very soiled curtains right into warm suds, you set the dirt---they come out looking grimy.

Then don't spare the rinse water. Put the curtains through at least three rinses---to take out all the soap. Have the rinse water lukewarm, just the same as the suds. And add a little starch to the final rinse.

When it comes to drying marquisette curtains, Mrs. Morrison thinks it's best to roll them up in a towel and iron them while they're still damp. If you put them on curtain stretchers with pins, the hems will dry in scallops. And if you hang them up at the window and put a curtain rod in the bottom hem, you encourage the marquisette to shrink more crosswise. Of course if your curtains are wide enough to stand that, it's a good way to keep the hems straight.

I'll have more to tell you later about Mrs. Morrison's service study on curtain fabrics. I see Mr. Kadderly's waiting to take you on that daily swing around the markets.

KADDERLY:

'Don't run off just yet, Ruth. I want to offer that bulletin on window curtaining to our listeners if I may.'

VAN DEMAN:

Certainly you may. It's made to be used.

KADDERLY:

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